Characters

- SHE
- CLARA PASSMORE
- VIRGIN MARY
- BASTARD
- OWL
- BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER
- REVEREND'S WIFE
- ANNE BOLEYN
- GODDAM FATHER
- RICHEST WHITE MAN IN THE TOWN
- DEAD WHITE FATHER
- REVEREND PASSMORE
- THE WHITE BIRD
- REVEREND PASSMORE'S CANARY
- GOD'S DOVE
- THE NEGRO MAN
- SHAKESPEARE
- CHAUCER
- WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

The characters change slowly back and forth into and out of themselves, leaving some garment from their previous selves upon them always to remind us of the nature of She who is Clara Passmore who is the Virgin Mary who is the Bastard who is the Owl's world.

Act

SCENE: *The scene is a New York subway is the Tower of London is a Harlem hotel room is St˙ Peter's. The scene is shaped like a subway car. The sounds are subway sounds and the main props of a subway are visible--poles. Two seats on the scene are like seats on the subway, the seat in which* SHE WHO Is *sits and* NEGRO MAN'S *seat.*

Seated is a plain, pallid NEGRO WOMAN, *wearing a cotton summer dress that is too long, a pair of white wedged sandals. She sits staring into space. She is* CLARA PASSMORE *who is the* VIRGIN MARY *who is the* BASTARD *who is the* OWL. SHE WHO IS *speaks in a soft voice as a Negro schoolteacher from*

Savannah would. SHE WHO IS *carries white handkerchiefs*, SHE WHO IS *carries notebooks that throughout the play like the handkerchiefs fall. She will pick them up, glance frenziedly at a page from a notebook, be distracted, place the notebooks in a disorderly pile, drop them again, etc˙ The scene should lurch, lights flash, gates slam. When* THEY *come in and exit they move in the manner of people on a train, too there is the noise of the train, the sound of moving steel on the track. The* WHITE BIRD'S *wings should flutter loudly. The gates, the High Altar, the ceiling and the Dome are like St˙ Peter's, the walls are like the Tower of London*.

The music which SHE WHO IS *hears at the most violent times of her experience should be Haydn's "Concerto for Horn in D" (Third Movement)*.

Objects on the stage (beards, wigs, faces) should be used in the manner that people use everyday objects such as spoons or newspapers. The Tower Gate should be black, yet slam like a subway door. The GATES SLAM. Four people enter from different directions. They are SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR, CHAUCER *and* ANNE BOLEYN. *They are dressed in costumes of Shakespeare, William the Conqueror, Chaucer and Anne Boleyn but too they are strangers entering a subway on a summer night, too they are the guards in the Tower of London. Their lines throughout the play are not spoken specifically by one person but by all or part of them*.

THEY

Bastard.

(They start at a distance, eventually crowding her. Their lines are spoken coldly. SHE WHO IS *is only a prisoner to them.)*

You are not his ancestor.
Keep her locked there, guard.
Bastard.

SHE

You must let me go down to the chapel to see him. He is my father.

THEY

Your father?

(Jeering.)

SHE

He is my father.

THEY

Keep her locked there, guard.

*(*SHAKESPEARE *crosses to gate and raises hands. There is a SLAM as if great door is being closed.)*

SHE

We came this morning. We were visiting the place of our ancestors, my father and I. We had a lovely morning, we rose in darkness, took a taxi past Hyde Park through the Marble Arch to Buckingham Palace, we

had our morning tea at Lyons then came out to the Tower. We were wandering about the gardens, my father leaning on my arm, speaking of you, William the Conqueror. My father

loved you, William....

THEY

(Interrupting.)

If you are his ancestor why are you a Negro?
Yes, why is it you are a Negro if you are his ancestor?
Keep her locked there.

SHE

You must let me go down to the Chapel to see him.

(SUBWAY STOPS. Doors open. CHAUCER *exits*. ANNE BOLEYN *and* WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR *remain staring at* HER. CHAUCER *and* SHAKESPEARE *return carrying a stiff dead man in a black suit. The most noticeable thing about him is his hair, long, silky, white hair that hangs as they bring him through the gate and place him at her feet.)*

THEY

Here is your father.

(They then all exit through various gate entrances. SHE *picks up the dead man, drags him to a dark, carved high-backed chair on the Right. At the same time a dark* NEGRO MAN, *with a dark suit and black glasses on, enters from the Right gate and sits on the other subway seat. Flashing, movement, slamming the gate. The scene revolves one and one-quarter turns as next action takes place. The* NEGRO MAN *sits up very straight and proceeds to watch* SHE WHO IS. *Until he speaks to her he watches her constantly with a wild, cold stare. The* DEAD FATHER *appears dead. He is dead. Yet as* SHE *watches, he moves and comes to life. The* DEAD FATHER *removes his hair, takes off his white face, from the chair he takes a white church robe and puts it on. Beneath his white hair is dark Negro hair. He is*

now REVEREND PASSMORE. *After he dresses he looks about as if something is missing. SUBWAY STOPS, doors open*. FATHER *exits and returns with a gold bird cage that hangs near the chair and a white battered Bible. Very matter-of-factly he sits down in the chair, stares for a moment at the cage, then opens the Bible, starting to read*. SHE *watches, highly distracted, until he falls asleep. Scene revolves one turn as* ANNE BOLEYN *throws red rice at* SHE WHO IS *and the* DEAD FATHER *who is now* REVEREND PASSMORE. *They see her*. SHE *exits and returns with a great black gate and places the gate where the pole is*. SHE WHO IS *runs to* ANNE BOLEYN. *)*

SHE

Anne, Anne Boleyn.

(Throws rice upon SHE WHO IS CLARA PASSMORE *who is the* VIRGIN MARY *who is the* BASTARD *who is the* OWL.)

Anne, you know so much of love, won't you help me? They took my father away and will not let me see him. They locked me in this tower and I can see them taking his body across to the Chapel to be buried and see his white hair hanging down. Let me into the Chapel. He is my blood father. I am almost white, am I not? Let me

into St˙ Paul's Chapel. Let me please go down to St˙ Paul's Chapel. I am his daughter.

*(*ANNE *appears to listen quite attentively but her reply is to turn into the* BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER. *She takes off part of her own long dress and puts on a rose-colored, cheap lace dress. While she does this there is a terrific SCREECH*. SHE WHO IS'S *reaction is to run back to her subway seat. She drops her notebooks. The* BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER *opens her arms to* SHE WHO IS. SHE *returns to the gate.)*

Anne.

(As if trying to bring back ANNE BOLEYN. *)*

BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER

(Laughs and throws a white bridal bouquet at her.)

Clara, I am not Anne. I am the Bastard's Black Mother, who cooked for somebody.

(Still holding out her arms, she kneels by the gate, her kinky hair awry. Eyes closed, she stares upward, praying. Suddenly she stops praying and pulls at SHE WHO IS *through the gate.)*

(The WHITE BIRD, *with very loud fluttering wings, flies down from St˙ Peter's Dome and goes into the cage*. REVEREND PASSMORE *gets up and closes the cage door.)*

SHE

Anne, it is I.

BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER

Clara, you were conceived by your Goddam Father who was The Richest White Man in the Town and somebody that cooked for him. That's why you're an owl.

(Laughs.)

That's why when I see you, Mary, I cry. I cry when I see Marys, cry for their deaths.

*(*WHITE BIRD *flies*. REVEREND *reads. The* BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER *stands at the gate, watches, then takes off rose lace dress and black face [beneath her black face is a more pallid Negro face], pulls down her hair, longer dark hair, and puts on a white dress. From a fold in the dress she takes out a picture of Christ, then kneels and stares upward. She is the REVEREND'S WIFE. While she does this the scene revolves one turn.)*

REVEREND'S WIFE

(Kneeling. REVEREND *stands and watches her*. REVEREND'S WIFE *takes a vial from her gown and holds it up.)*

These are the fruits of my maidenhead, owl blood Clara who is the Bastard Clara

Passmore to whom we gave our name, see the Owl blood, that is why I cry when I see Marys, cry for their deaths, Owl Mary Passmore.

*(*SHE *gets up, exits from a side gate. SUBWAY STOPS, gates open, they come in, gates close. SUBWAY STARTS*. SHE WHO IS *goes to the* REVEREND *as if to implore him. He then changes into the* DEAD

FATHER, *resuming his dirty white hair*. THEY *stand about.)*

SHE

Dear Father, My Goddam Father who was the Richest White Man in the Town, who is Dead Father--you know that England is the home of dear Chaucer, Dickens and dearest Shakespeare. Winters we spent here at the Tower, our chambers were in the Queen's House, summers we spent at Stratford with dearest Shakespeare. It was all so lovely. I spoke to Anne Boleyn, Dead Father. She knows so much of love and suffering and I believe she is going to try to help me.

(Takes a sheaf of papers from her notebooks; they fall to the floor.)

Communications, all communications to get you the proper burial, the one you deserve in St˙ Paul's Chapel, they are letting you rot, my Goddam Father who was the Richest White Man in the Town--they are letting you rot in that town in Georgia, I haven't been able to see the king. I'll speak again to Anne Boleyn. She knows so much of love.

(Shows the papers to the DEAD FATHER *who sits with his hair hanging down, dead, at which point scene revolves clock-wise one-half turn. There are SCREECHES, and bird flaps wings. The* REVEREND'S WIFE *enters and prays at gate.)*

DEAD FATHER

If you are my ancestor why are you a Negro, Bastard? What is a Negro doing at the Tower of London, staying at the Queen's House? Clara, I am your Goddam Father who was the Richest White Man in the

Town and you are a schoolteacher in Savannah who spends her summers in Teachers College. You are not my ancestor. You are my bastard. Keep her locked there, William.

SHE

(They stare at her like passengers on a subway, standing, holding the hand straps.)

We were wandering about the garden, you leaning on my arm, speaking of William the Conqueror. We sat on the stone bench to rest, when we stood up you stumbled and fell onto the walk--dead. Dead. I called the guard. Then I called the Warder and told him my father had just died, that we had been visiting London together, the place of our ancestors and all the lovely English, and my father just died.

(She reaches out to touch him.)

DEAD FATHER

You are not my ancestor.

SHE

They jeered. They brought me to this tower and locked me up. I can see they're afraid of me. From the tower I saw them drag you across the court ... your hair hanging down. They have taken off your shoes and you are stiff. You are stiff.

(Touches him.)

My dear father.

(MUSIC: Haydn.)

DEAD FATHER

Daughter of somebody that cooked for me.

(Smiles. He then ignores SHE WHO IS, *changes into the* REVEREND, *takes the Bible and starts to read. The* WHITE BIRD *flies into the cage. Wings flutter. The* REVEREND'S WIFE *prays, lights a candle. The* REVEREND *watches the* BIRD. REVEREND'S WIFE *then puts on her black face, rose dress. Some of the red rice has fallen near her, she says, "Oww," and starts to peck at it like a bird*. SHE WHO IS *wanders about, then comes to speak to the* BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER *who remains seated like an owl. END MUSIC.)*

SHE

It was you, the Bastard's Black Mother, who told me. I asked you where did Mr˙ William Mattheson's

family come from and you, my Black Mother, said: I believe his father came from England. England, I said. England is the Brontës' home. Did you know, Black Bastard's Mother, who cooked for somebody, in the Reverend's parlor--there in a glass bookcase are books and England is the home of Chaucer, Dickens and Shakespeare. Black Mother who cooked for somebody, Mr˙ William Mattheson died today. I was at the College. The Reverend's Wife called me, Clara who is the Bastard who is the Virgin Mary who is the Owl. Clara, who is the Bastard who is the Virgin Mary who is the Owl, Clara, she said, the Reverend told me to call you and tell you Mr˙ William Mattheson died today or it was yesterday he died yesterday. It was yesterday. The Reverend told me to tell you it was yesterday he died and it is today they're burying him. Clara who is the Bastard, you mustn't come. Don't do anything foolish like come to the funeral, Mary. You've always been such a fool about that white man, Clara. But I am coming, the Black Bastard's Mother. I am coming, my Goddam Father who was the Richest White Man in Jacksonville, Georgia. When I arrive in London, I'll go out to Buckingham Palace, see the Thames at dusk and Big Ben. I'll go for lovely walks through Hyde Park, and to innumerable little tearooms with great bay windows and white tablecloths on little white tables and order tea. I will go all over and it will be June. Then I'll go out to the Tower to see you, my father.

(SUBWAY STOPS. Doors open. THEY *enter.)*

THEY

If you are his ancestor, what are you doing on the subway at night looking for men?
What are you doing looking for men to take to a hotel room in Harlem?

Negro men?
Negro men, Clara Passmore?

(GATES CLOSE, SUBWAY STARTS, BIRD'S *wings flap.)*

SHE

(Runs to the BIRD.)

My dead father's bird: God's Dove. My father died today.

BIRD

(Mocking.)

My father died today, God's Dove.

SHE

He was the Richest White Man in our Town. I was conceived by him and somebody that cooked for him.

BIRD

What are you doing in the Tower of London then?

(The REVEREND *becomes the* DEAD FATHER *who comes forward, pantomimes catching the* BIRD, *puts him in the cage, shuts the door.)*

SHE

My father.

(He turns, stares at her and comes toward her and dies. There is a CLANG.)

What were you saying to William, my father, you loved William so?

(She holds him in her arms. He opens his eyes.)

DEAD FATHER

(Waking.)

Mary, at last you are coming to me.

(MUSIC: Haydn.)

SHE

I am not Mary, I am Clara, your daughter, Reverend Passmore--I mean Dead Father.

*(*BIRD *flies in the cage.)*

DEAD FATHER

Yes, my Mary, you are coming into my world. You are filled with dreams of my world. I sense it all.

(Scene revolves counterclockwise one and one-quarter turns. LIGHTS FLASH. SHE WHO IS, *trying to escape, runs into* NEGRO MAN.)

NEGRO MAN

At last you are coming to me.

(Smiles.)

DEAD FATHER

Mary, come in here for eternity. Are you confused? Yes, I can see you are confused.

*(*THEY *come on.)*

THEY

Are you confused?

(One of them, CHAUCER, *is now dressed as the* REVEREND. *He comes, falls down onto the empty high-backed chair and sits staring into the Bible.)*

DEAD FATHER

So at last you are coming to me, Bastard.

*(*BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER *exits from gate, returns, part owl with owl feathers upon her, dragging a great dark bed through the gate.)*

BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER

Why be confused? The Owl was your beginning, Mary.

(There is a GREAT CLANG. Begins to build with the bed and feathers the High Altar. Feathers fly.)

SHE

He came to me in the outhouse, he came to me under the porch, in the garden, in the fig tree. He told me you are an owl, ow, oww, I am your beginning, ow. You belong here with us owls in the fig tree, not to somebody that cooks for your Goddam Father, oww, and I ran to the outhouse in the night crying oww. Bastard they say, the people in the town all say Bastard, but I--I belong to God and the owls, ow, and I sat in the fig tree. My Goddam Father is the Richest White Man in the Town, but I belong to the owls, till Reverend Passmore adopted me they all said Bastard ... then my father was a reverend. He preached in the Holy Baptist Church on the top of the hill, on the top of the Holy Hill and everybody in the town knew then my name was Mary. My father was the Baptist preacher and I was Mary.

(SUBWAY STOPS, GATES OPEN. THEY *enter.*

GATES CLOSE. SUBWAY STARTS. SHE *sits next to* NEGRO MAN.)

I who am the ancestor of Shakespeare, Chaucer and William the Conqueror, I went to London--the Queen Elizabeth. London. They all said who ever heard of anybody going to London but I went. I stayed in my cabin the whole crossing, solitary. I was the only Negro there. I read books on subjects like the History of London, the Life of Anne Boleyn, Mary Queen of Scots and Sonnets. When I wasn't in the cabin I wrapped myself in a great sweater and sat over the dark desks in the writing room and wrote my father. I wrote him every day of my journey. I met my father once when my mother took me to visit him and we had to go into the back door of his house. I was married once briefly. On my wedding day the Reverend's Wife came to me and said when I see Marys I cry for their deaths, when I see brides, Clara, I cry for their deaths. But the past years I've spent teaching alone in Savannah. And alone I'm almost thirty-four, I who am the ancestor of somebody that cooked for somebody and William the Conqueror.

*(*DEAD FATHER *rises, goes to her, then dies again, GREAT CLANG*. BLACK MOTHER *shakes a rattle at* SHE. SHE *screams at the* DEAD FATHER *and the* MOTHER.)

YOU must know how it is to be filled with yearning.

*(*THEY *laugh*. MOTHER *bangs at the bed.)*

NEGRO MAN

(Touches her.)

And what exactly do you yearn for?

SHE

You know.

NEGRO MAN

No, what is it?

SHE

I want what I think everyone wants.

NEGRO MAN

And what is that?

SHE

I don't know. Love or something, I guess.

NEGRO MAN

Out there Owl?

DEAD FATHER

In St˙ Paul's Chapel Owl?

THEY

Keep her locked there, guard.

(GREAT CLANG.)

BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER

Is this love to come from out there?

SHE

I don't know what you mean.

DEAD FATHER

I know you don't.

THEY

We know you don't.

SHE

Call me Mary.

NEGRO MAN

Mary?

THEY

Keep her locked there.

DEAD FATHER

If you are Mary what are you doing in the Tower of London?

NEGRO MAN

Mary?

(The REVEREND *gets up, goes to chair, puts on robe, sits. The* BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER *reappears on the other side of the gate, owl feathers about her, bearing a vial, still wearing the long black hair of the* REVEREND'S WIFE.)

BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER

When I see sweet Marys I cry for their deaths, Clara. The Reverend took my maidenhead and I am not a Virgin anymore and that is why you must be Mary always be Mary, Clara.

SHE

Mama.

*(*BLACK MOTHER *rises. Steps in costume of* ANNE BOLEYN.)

Mama.

(Watches her change to ANNE BOLEYN. *They watch.)*

BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER

What are you doing on the subway if you are his ancestor?

*(*ANNE *makes circular cross around stage until* SHE *is back in same position* SHE *started at.)*

SHE

I am Clara Passmore. I am not His ancestor. I

ride, look for men to take to a Harlem hotel room, to love, dress them as my father, beg to take me.

THEY

Take you?

SHE

Yes, take me, Clara Passmore.

THEY

Take you, Bastard?

SHE

There is a bed there.

(The WHITE BIRD *laughs like the mother.)*

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

And do they take you?

SHE

No, William.

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

No?

SHE

Something happens.

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

Happens?

CHAUCER

Happens?

SHE

Something strange always happens, Chaucer.

CHAUCER

Where?

SHE

In the hotel room. It's how I've passed my summer in New York, nights I come to the subway, look for men. It's how I've passed my summer. If they would only take me! But something strange happens.

ANNE BOLEYN

Take you, Mary. Why, Mary?

*(*ANNE *has now reached gate.)*

*(*BLACK MOTHER *steps out of costume, crosses to bed*. SHE *talks to* ANNE *as if she were there.)*

SHE

Anne, you must help me. They, my Black Mother and my Goddam Father and the Reverend and his wife, they and the teachers at the school where I teach, and Professor Johnson, the principal to whom I'm engaged, they all say, "London, who in the hell ever heard of anybody going to London?" Of course I shouldn't go. They said I had lost my mind, read so much, buried myself in my books.

They said I should stay and teach summer school to the kids up from Oglethorpe. But I went. All the way from Piccadilly Circus out there in the black taxi, my cold hands were colder than ever. Then it happened. No sooner than I left the taxi and passed down a grey walk through a dark gate and into a garden where there were black ravens on the grass when I broke down. I broke down and started to cry, oh the Tower, winters in Queen's House, right in front of everybody. People came and stared, I was the only Negro there. The Guard came and stared, the ravens flew and finally a man with a black hat on helped me out through the gate into the street. I am never going back, Anne. Anne, I am never going back. I will not go.

(SUBWAY STOPS, GATES OPEN.)

THEY

Keep her locked there, guard.

(LIGHT comes through gates as if opened. SHE *makes crown of paper, and places on* NEGRO MAN'S *head.)*

SHE

God, do you see it? Do you see? They are opening the cell door to let me go.

NEGRO MAN

See it, Mary?

SHE

They are opening the cell door to let me go down to St˙ Paul's Chapel where I am yearning to go. Do you see it?

NEGRO MAN

Love? Love Mary?

SHE

Love?

NEGRO MAN

Love in St˙ Paul's Chapel?

(He tries to grab at her.)

SHE

NO, no, the love that exists between you and me. Do you see it?

NEGRO MAN

Love Mary?

(He takes her hand, with

his other hand, he tries to undress her.)

SHE

Love God.

NEGRO MAN

Love Mary?

SHE

Love God.

THEY

(Simultaneously.)

Bastard, you are not His ancestor, you are not God's ancestor.

(There is a SCREECH as THEY *bring the* DEAD FATHER *and leave him at her feet.)*

NEGRO MAN

Love Mary?

SHE

Love God. Yes.

BASTARD'S BLACK MOTHER

(Calls.)

Clara. Clara.

(The REVEREND *watching.)*

THEY

Open the door. Let her go, let her go, guards. Open the cell door.

*(*THEY *exit, leaving the gates open.)*

*(*NEGRO MAN *will not release* SHE WHO IS *Clara who is the Bastard who is the Virgin Mary who is the Owl.)*

SHE

Go away. Go away.

(The NEGRO MAN *will not release her.)*

(The REVEREND'S WIFE *goes on building the High Altar with owl feathers, prays, builds, prays, stops, holds out her hand to* SHE WHO IS, *puts up candles, puts up owl feathers, laughs, puts more candles on the High Altar.)*

REVEREND'S WIFE

(Calls.)

Owl, come sit by me.

(The REVEREND'S WIFE *does not look at* SHE WHO Is, *but rather stares feverishly upward, her gestures possessing the fervent quality of Biblical images. Sitting on the High Altar, she holds one of her hands over her shoulder as though she drew near the fingers of a deity. Suddenly her hand reaches inside her gown and she pulls up a butcher knife.)*

Clara.

(Staring upward, holding the knife.)

SHE

Yes, the Reverend's Wife who came to me on my wedding day and said I cry for the death of brides. Yes?

REVEREND'S WIFE

I told the Reverend if he ever came near me again ...

(She turns the butcher knife around.)

Does he not know I am Mary, Christ's bride? What does he think? Does he think I am like your black mother who was the biggest whore in town? He must know I'm Mary. Only Mary would marry the Reverend Passmore of the church on the top of the Holy Hill.

(Turns the knife around, staring at it. SHE *is leaving with* NEGRO MAN. REVEREND'S WIFE *is pulling her.)*

We adopted you, took you from your bastard birth, Owl.

*(*SHE *and* NEGRO MAN *exit. GATES CLOSE. SUBWAY STARTS*. REVEREND'S WIFE *drags bed onto Center Stage. She enters with* NEGRO MAN *Down Center.)*

SHE

Home, God, we're home. Did you know we came from England, God? It's the Brontes' home too. Winters we spent here at the Tower. Our chambers were in the Queen's House. Summers we spent at Stratford. It was so

lovely. God, do you remember the loveliness?

(LIGHTS FLASH. Scene revolves clockwise one and one-quarter turns. BIRD *flaps wings. LIGHT comes up on him.)*

BIRD

If you are the Virgin, what are you doing with this Negro in a Harlem hotel room? Mary?

SHE

My name is Clara Passmore.

BIRD

Mary.

*(*WHITE BIRD *laughs like the* MOTHER. *The* REVEREND'S WIFE *lights candles.)*

NEGRO MAN

(Going to her.)

What is it?

SHE

Call me Mary, God.

NEGRO MAN

Mary?

SHE

God, do you remember the loveliness?

REVEREND'S WIFE

(Lights more candles and moves closer with the butcher knife, calling:)

Clara.

(The BIRD *flies wildly, the* REVEREND *sits in the chair reading the white tattered Bible.)*

NEGRO MAN

What is it? What is it? What is wrong?

(He tries to undress her. Underneath her body is black. He throws off the crown she has placed on him. She is wildly trying to get away from him.)

What is it?

(The WHITE BIRD flies toward them and about the green room.)

Are you sick?

SHE

(Smiles.)

No, God.

(She is in a trance.)

No, I am not sick. I only have a dream of love. A dream. Open the cell door and let me go down to St˙ Paul's Chapel.

(The blue crepe shawl is half about her. She shows the NEGRO MAN *her notebooks, from which a mass of papers fall. She crazily tries to gather them up. During this* SHE *walks around bed. He follows her.)*

Communications, God, communications, letters to my father. I am making it into my thesis. I write my father every day of the year.

God, I who am the Bastard who is the Virgin Mary who is the Owl, I came here this morning with my father. We were visiting England, the place of our ancestors, my father and I who am the Bastard who is the Virgin Mary who is the Owl. We had a lovely morning. We rose in darkness, took a taxi past Hyde Park, through the Marble Arch to Buckingham Palace. We had our morning tea at Lyons and then we came out to the Tower.

And I started to cry and a man with a black hat on helped me out of the gate to the street, I was the only Negro here.

They took him away and would not let me see him. They who are my Black Mother and my Goddam Father locked me in the fig tree and took his body away and his

white hair hung down.

Now they, my Black Mother and my Goddam Father who pretend to be Chaucer, Shakespeare and Eliot and all my beloved English, come to my cell and stare and I can see they despise me and I despise them.

They are dragging his body across the green his white hair hanging down. They are taking off his shoes and he is stiff. I must get into the chapel to see him. I must. He is my blood father. God, let me into his burial.

(He grabs her Down Center. SHE, *kneeling.)*

I call God and the Owl answers.

(Softer.)

It haunts my Tower calling, its feathers are blowing against the cell wall, speckled in the garden on the fig tree, it comes, feathered, great hollow-eyed with yellow skin and yellow eyes, the flying bastard. From my Tower I keep calling and the only answer is the Owl, God.

(Pause. Stands.)

I am only yearning for our kingdom, God.

(The WHITE BIRD *flies back into the cage*, REVEREND *reads smiling, the* DEAD FATHER *lies on cell*

floor. The MOTHER, *now part the black mother and part the* REVEREND'S WIFE *in a white dress, wild kinky hair, part feathered, comes closer to* CLARA.)

MOTHER

Owl in the fig tree, owl under the house, owl in outhouse.

(Calling cheerfully the way one would call a child, kissing SHE WHO IS.)

There is a way from owldom.

(Kissing her again.)

Clara who is the Bastard who is the Virgin who is the Owl.

SHE

(Goes to MOTHER.)

My Black Mother who cooked for somebody who is the Reverend's Wife. Where is Anne Boleyn?

MOTHER

Owl in the fig tree, do you know it? Do you? Do you know the way to St˙ Paul's Chapel, Clara?

(Takes her hand.)

I do. Kneel, Mary, by the gate and pray

with me who is your black mother who is Christ's Bride.

(She holds up the butcher knife.)

Kneel by the High Altar and pray with me.

(They kneel; she smiles.)

Do you know it, Clara, do you, Clara Bastard?

(Kisses her.)

Clara, I know the way to St˙ Paul's Chapel. I know the way to St˙ Paul's Chapel, Clara.

*(*MOTHER *lifts knife. She stabs herself. At this moment*, BIRD *flaps wings, scene moves counterclockwise one turn. There is a SCREECH of a SUBWAY. Then the Haydn plays. When revolve stops*, NEGRO MAN *tries to kiss* HER *and pin* HER *down on bed*. SHE *is fighting him off. The* WHITE BIRD *descends steps.)*

SHE

God, say, "You know I love you, Mary, yes, I love you. That love is the oldest, purest testament in my heart." Say, "Mary, it was a testament imprinted on my soul long before the world began. I pray to you, Mary." God, say, "Mary, I pray to you. Darling, come to my kingdom. Mary, leave owldom--come to my kingdom. I am awaiting you."

(The NEGRO MAN *tries again to kiss* HER. *The* WHITE BIRD *picks up the* DEAD MOTHER *and takes her to the top of St˙ Peters Dome. They remain there, watching down. The* REVEREND *reads the Bible, smiling.)*

NEGRO MAN

What is wrong?

SHE

Wrong, God?

NEGRO MAN

God?

SHE

Wrong, God?

NEGRO MAN

God?

(They are upon the burning High Altar. He tries to force her down, yet at the same time he is frightened by her. The DEAD FATHER *who has been holding the candles, smiles.)*

SHE

Negro!

(MUSIC ENDS.)

Keep her locked there, guard.

(They struggle.)

I cry for the death of Marys.

(They struggle. SHE *screeches.)*

Negro!

(She tries to get out of the room, but he will not let her go.)

Let me go to St˙ Paul's Chapel. Let me go down to see my Goddam Father who was the Richest White Man in the Town.

(They struggle, he is frightened now.)

God, God, call me, Mary.

*(*SHE *screeches louder.)*

God!!

(Suddenly she breaks away, withdraws the butcher knife, still with blood and feathers upon it, and very quickly tries to attack him, holds the knife up, aiming it at him, but then dropping it just as suddenly in a gesture of wild weariness. He backs farther. She falls down onto the side of the burning bed. The NEGRO MAN *backs farther out through the gate*. SHE, *fallen at the side of the Altar burning, her head bowed, both hands conceal her face, feathers fly, green lights are strong, Altar burning*, WHITE BIRD *laughs from the Dome*. SHE WHO IS *Clara who is the Bastard who is the Virgin Mary suddenly looks like an owl, and lifts her bowed head, stares into space and speaks:)*

Ow ... oww.

*(*FATHER *rises and slowly blows out candles on bed.)*

CURTAIN